

Lectio Divina—Divine Reading

One ancient practice central to Christian prayer is called *lectio divina*, or “divine reading.” In *lectio divina*, we begin by reading and savoring a short passage of scripture. Our inner posture is one of a listening heart with an unhurried expectation that God has a message to convey especially suited to our circumstance. We read and ruminate with the ears of our heart open, alert to connections the Spirit may reveal between the passage and our life situation. We ask, “What are you saying to me today, Lord? Listening in this way requires an attitude of patient receptivity in which we let go of our own agendas and open ourselves to God’s shaping purpose.

Once we have heard a word that we know is meant for our ears, we feel naturally drawn to prayer. From listening we move to speaking—perhaps in confession or sorrow, perhaps in joy or thanksgiving, perhaps in anger or hurt, perhaps in trust or surrender. Finally, after pouring out our heart to God, we come to rest simply and deeply in the wonderful, loving presence of God.

Reading, reflecting, responding, and resting—this forms the basic rhythm of *lectio divina*. God is present in you through the Spirit who speaks to you now in scripture and who prays in you and for you. Ask for grace to listen to what God says, then choose one of the short biblical passages here and follow the steps: read, reflect, respond, and rest.

1. Read the scripture slowly.

Watch for a key phrase or word that jumps out at you or promises to hold a special meaning for you. It is better to dwell profoundly on one word or phrase than to skim the surface of several chapters. Read with your own life and choices in mind.

2. Reflect on a word or phrase.

Let the special word or phrase that you discovered in the first step sink into your heart. Bring mind, will, and emotions to task. Be like Mary, Jesus’ mother, who heard the angel’s

announcement and “treasured” and “pondered” what she had heard. (Luke 2:19 NRSV)

3. Respond to what you have read.

Form a prayer that expresses your response to the idea, then “pray it back to God.” What you have read is woven through what you tell God.

4. Rest in God’s presence.

Be still and let God’s loving spirit pour out on you.

Try It Out:

- Do Justice, Love Kindness (Micah 6:8)
- God’s New Thing (Isaiah 43:19-21)
- Do Not Fear (Isaiah 43:1-2, 4)
- Let Your Light Shine (Matthew 5:13-16)
- Be Still (Psalm 46:10-11)

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